DANGER forward

The Magazine Of The Big Red One, Vietnam

FIRE!
The Story of Artillery

SUPPORT COMMAND

VIETNAM BATTLES

GALLANTRY CROSS

COMBAT ART

LONG RANGE PATROL

ONE LINERS

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, 3 March 1863, has awarded in the name of The Congress the Medal of Honor posthumously to

PLATOON SERGEANT MATTHEW LEONARD
UNITED STATES ARMY

for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty:

Platoon Sergeant Leonard distinguished himself during combat operations with Company B, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, near Suoi Da, Republic of Vietnam, on 28 February 1967. His platoon was suddenly attacked by a large enemy force employing small arms, automatic weapons, and hand grenades. Although the platoon leader and several other key leaders were among the first wounded, Sergeant Leonard quickly rallied his men to throw back the initial enemy assaults. During the short pause that followed, he organized a defensive perimeter, redistributed ammunition, and inspired his comrades through his forceful leadership and words of encouragement. Noticing a wounded companion outside the perimeter, he dragged the man to safety but was struck by a sniper's bullet which shattered his left hand. Refusing medical attention and continuously exposing himself to the increasing fire as the enemy again assaulted the perimeter, Sergeant Leonard moved from position to position to direct the fire of his men against the well camouflaged foe. Under the cover of the main attack, the enemy moved a machinegun into a location where it could sweep the entire perimeter. This threat was magnified when the platoon machinegun in this area malfunctioned. Sergeant Leonard quickly crawled to the gun position and was helping to clear the malfunction when the gunner and other men in the vicinity were wounded by fire from the enemy machinegun. Sergeant Leonard rose to his feet, charged the enemy gun, and destroyed the hostile crew despite being hit several times by enemy fire. He moved to a tree, propped himself against it, and continued to engage the enemy until he succumbed to his many wounds. His fighting spirit, heroic leadership, and valiant acts inspired the remaining members of his platoon to hold back the enemy until assistance arrived. Sergeant Leonard's profound courage and devotion to his men are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and his gallant actions reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army.

Platoon Sergeant Leonard was the fifth BIG RED ONE soldier in Vietnam to receive our nation's highest award for valor above and beyond the call of duty. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Lois Leonard, Birmingham, Ala., who accepted the award from Secretary of the Army Stanley R. Resor in ceremonies at the Pentagon.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

McCormick Research Center

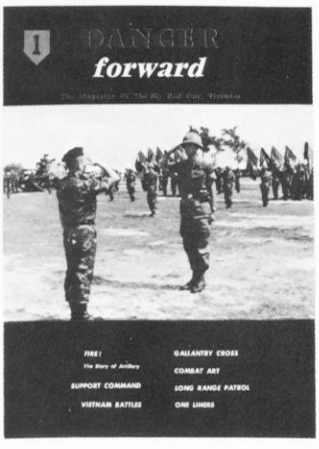
DANGER forward ©

Volume Three, Number One—March 1969

The Magazine Of The Big Red One, Vietnam

COMMAND GROUP
MG Orwin C. Talbott
Commanding General
BG Albert H. Smith
Assistant Division Commander
COL George G. Cantlay
Assistant Division Commander
COL Archie R. Hyle
Chief of Staff

EDITORIAL STAFF
1LT Willie F. Johnson
Publications Officer
SFC Larry N. Crump
Editor



CONTENTS

FIRE! *The Story of Artillery* **2**
The growth of artillery and how Division Artillery is organized within the BIG RED ONE

SUPPORT COMMAND **10**
The Division's "lifeline" provides everything from ice cream to tanks and bullets to dental care

VIETNAM BATTLES **15**
Vietnam Battles 41–45 cover the Division's actions during October and November 1968

GALLANTRY CROSS WITH PALM **30**
The Government of Vietnam awards the Big Red One a unit citation for distinguished service

COMBAT ART **33**
The eyes of an artist view the Fighting First

LONG RANGE PATROL **39**
The "Lurps" keep close tabs on "Charlie" by using tactics developed by the American Indian more than 300 years ago

◀ABOUT THE COVER▶ Major General Orwin C. Talbott, Commanding General, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION accepts the Gallantry Cross with Palm from Lieutenant General Co Cao Tri, Commanding General of the Vietnamese III Corps Tactical Zone. (Photo by Sp4 Wayne L. Yeager)

DANGER FORWARD, an authorized publication of the US Army, provides timely, authoritative information of professional interest on combat operations, revolutionary development programs and combat support procedures of the First Infantry Division, Vietnam. It serves as a means of expression for views of the Commanding General and achieves command information objectives of the Department of the Army and the First Infantry Division. Material of interest to Division members and the Army in general is invited and should be mailed to: Editor, DANGER FORWARD, Information Office, First Infantry Division, APO 96345. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Department of the Army. The title DANGER FORWARD is copyrighted by the Society of the First Division.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

FIRE!

The Story of Artillery

Sp6 Jay G. Smith

BY 1LT WARREN SELF

THE AUTHORITATIVE VOICE, with a sense of urgency, yet not one to cause panic, comes crackling through the transmitter:

Battery Adjust. And an equally commanding voice on the receiving end repeats each word clearly and distinctly. "Battery adjust!"

A group of men quickly move to their positions, and with efficiency and speed, begin their appointed tasks.

Shell H.E., comes the voice again. "Shell H.E.!" repeats the second voice.

Lot Xray. "Lot xray!" comes the echo.

Charge Four. "Charge four!"

Center One Round, Battery Two Rounds in Effect. "Center one round, Battery two rounds in effect!" the order is repeated.

Deflection Two-Four-Five-One. "Deflection two-four-five-one!"

Quadrant Three-Two-Seven. "Quadrant three-two-seven!" At this moment hands are lifted, then sweep downward and the shouted command "FIRE!" is heard down the line. There is a deafening roar as guns number three and four of a 105mm battery begin a fire mission in support of BIG RED ONE soldiers engaged in combat.

Speed, efficiency and accuracy. These are the characteristics of the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY. Putting steel on the target to support the maneuver elements is the mission of the men of "Div Arty" and it is a mission to which every artilleryman is dedicated.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

DIVISION ARTILLERY, commanded by Colonel Richard M. Love., Lawton, Okla., consists of three 105mm howitzer battalions, three 155mm howitzer batteries and an 8-inch howitzer battery. In addition, there are seven 4.2 inch heavy mortar platoons attached to Div Arty.

Artillery has been around in one form or another since pre-biblical days. The Bible indicates that a forerunner of artillery was used at the siege of Jerusalem during the reign of King Uzziah eight centuries before the time of Christ. These machines were of two basic types; catapults, capable of hurling a 100-pound missile roughly 500 yards in a curved trajectory, and ballistae, flat trajectory weapons firing arrows, darts, and stones.

Philip of Macedon used "artillery" as a siege weapon, and his son, Alexander the Great, further developed artillery as a useful weapon of war, employing it with great effectiveness at Jaxartes in 336 B.C. A short time later, the Greeks had sufficiently advanced to use repeating weapons which fired projectiles from magazines. The Carthaginian Army had about 10 catapults for every 1,000 foot or horse soldiers, a much greater proportion of artillery than that found in today's infantry division.

The BIG RED ONE's three 105mm howitzer battalions consist of the 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery, which provides direct support to the 1st Brigade; the 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery in direct support of the 2d Brigade; and the 2d Battalion, 33d Artillery which provides direct support to the 3d Brigade.

The 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery, which is comprised of the three 155mm howitzer batteries and the 8-inch howitzer battery, provides general support and reinforcing firepower for the Division. It also provides direct support to the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

The seven 4.2 inch heavy mortar platoons attached to DIVISION ARTILLERY are employed as close support weapons for maneuver elements, enhancing fire support capability, and adding flexibility to combat operations. Each mortar platoon has four 4.2 inch mortars.

According to the U.S. Army Field Artillery Center, Fort Sill, Okla., the artillery school for the free world, the cannon came into general use during the Hundred Years' War (1330–1453). During the Battle of Crecy in 1346 the English used three cannons which they placed directly on the ground in an open field. Elevation was achieved by mounding the earth or propping up the tubes with wooden blocks.

In the Hissite Wars of Bohemia (1419–1424), artillery was further developed as a useful weapon. Although catapults were still in use for the purpose of hurling rotting carcasses and other filth into castle confines in hopes of causing diseases and breaking morale, cannons were gaining in importance and effectiveness.

By 1435 the Germans had developed the mortar. This was used alongside the siege cannon of Mohammed II at Constantinople in 1453, the first recorded use of "case" or canister shot.

Although these early weapons now seem like crude devices with very short ranges, they provided the basis for the weapons in use today by the BIG RED ONE.

By the 16th century, Artillery had become a flourishing art. Early cannons were rented on request to

3a Sp6 Jay G. Smith

A MEMBER OF the 8th Bn, 6th Arty sets a fuse on a round for the 8-inch howitzer.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Fire mission...

belligerents. By this time artillery had gained enough recognition to merit the dubious honor of a pronouncement of excommunication on all artillerists.

During the 16th century "corned" or grained powder was developed, and trunnions began to be incorporated on the pieces and the rate of fire was increased to eight rounds per hour. Between shots, the bore was swabbed with clear water or vinegar, and after about 40 rounds the gun became so hot that it was unsafe to load and was "refreshed" with an hour's rest.

By contrast, DIVISION ARTILLERY can and does fire many times that number today. For example, during Operation MANHATTAN the Division units fired more than 53,000 rounds of artillery. In Operations DALLAS, BLUEFIELD, BILLINGS and PORTLAND, more than 168,000 rounds were placed on enemy elements and Operation SHENANDOAH II saw the enemy blasted by more than 215,200 rounds of artillery.

During the Revolutionary War (1775–1783) American artillery was made up of an accumulation of guns, mortars and howitzers of every sort. The tubes were brass; the carriages were wood. Horses were hitched in single file and civilian drivers were hired. On the battlefield the pieces were maneuvered by dragropes manned by the "mattrosses," as cannoneers were then called. Standard ammunition for guns was solid shot, grape, and case shot; for howitzers and mortars, shells and carcasses or exploding bombs. The 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY's Battery D, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery is the direct lineal descendant of Alexander Hamilton's New York Provincial Artillery Company which distinguished itself during America's stuggle for independence.

World War I forced quantity production of all types of weapons, and artillery became heavier, more expensive, and far more complicated. It also accounted for more than 75 per cent of all battlefield casualties and became indispensable to the infantry for any important military enterprise, whether offensive or defensive.

In all the wars in which America has taken part, artillery has given the best possible support to the ground gaining arms, and Vietnam is no exception. To fight a counterinsurgency war on the terrain of Vietnam however, has required the artillery to develop more flexibility. Adhering to the basic requirements of being able to move, shoot and communicate, the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY has made itself a highly airmobile combat arm capable of rapid displacement and emplacement.

Elements of DIVISION ARTILLERY accompany the infantry to all parts of the BIG RED ONE's area of operation and provide effective fire support only a very few moments after the helicopters set the howitzers on the ground.

Much of the terrain in Vietnam is less than ideal for artillery positions, but in spite of the jungle, the rice paddies, and the monsoons, the artillery has succeeded, through the employment of many innovations, in providing the maneuver elements with a constant "fan of fire" under which to operate.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Spc Jay G. Smith

AERIAL VIEWS of Remagan II illustrate the "star formation" of a howitzer group.

All of DIVISION ARTILLERY's 105mm howitzer batteries, the 4.2 inch mortars, and one 155mm battery are completely airmobile and can be rapidly moved from one fire support base to another. When any battery moves into position, the howitzers are placed in a formation, usually the *star* formation, allowing them to be fired in any direction.

To deliver artillery fire on an enemy position, three essential elements of a firing battery must operate together as a close knit team. The forward observer (FO), an artillery officer, is deployed with the maneuver element. In addition to advising the maneuver unit commander about the employment and capabilities of artillery fire support available to him, the forward observer is responsible for identifying enemy targets, requesting fire on them, and adjusting that fire onto the targets.

The forward observer sends a fire mission by radio to the fire direction center (FDC) of the battery providing support for the maneuver unit and the observer's target location is plotted on the fire direction center charts. The data given to the FDC by the forward observers are converted to data that can be given to the howitzer sections in the form of a fire command. Within a few seconds after the initial request for fire is received at FDC, the first rounds are on the way. The observer makes any further adjustments

Spc Jay G. Smith

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

121 Sig

155MM SELF-PROPELLED howitzers are layed while simultaneously firing support for maneuver elements.

HARASSMENT AND interdiction fire greatly hamper enemy movement plans.

1LT Jonathan Linen

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

A BIG RED ONE mortar crew provides close support firepower for Division troops.

1LT Jonathan Lincn

necessary to put the steel on the target and the FDC personnel convert these adjustments to subsequent fire commands.

It does not stop there however. To effect complete coverage of combat operations and to ensure rapid response to the maneuver units' needs for artillery support, close liaison and coordination between the artillery commanders and the infantry, armor, or cavalry commanders is required. This coordination occurs at all levels of command.

The Fire Support Element at the Division Tactical Operations Center advises the commanding general and his staff about fire support capabilities and artillery during combat operations.

Each brigade commander has an artillery liaison officer from the direct support battalion to advise him about the employment and capabilities of the firepower at his disposal. Every infantry battalion commander has a liaison officer to assist him with the effective utilization of artillery and the company commander has the artillery forward observer as his artillery fire support element.

The liaison efforts are complemented by the close coordination of artillery fire planning. Division Artillery operates a Tactical Operations Center which overwatches all artillery deployed throughout the TAOR. Each battalion tactical operation center concentrates on planning and coordinating artillery fires and move-

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

ments of those units assigned to it or under its operational control.

Because DIVISION ARTILLERY operates under the task force concept, the artillery batteries often are under the operational control of a battalion headquarters other than their own. This enables artillery firepower to be concentrated where it is most needed, and it provides for centralized control which yields a higher degree of efficiency.

While this arrangement adds flexibility to artillery operations, it increases the importance of having highly trained and experienced artillery personnel in DIVISION ARTILLERY and the battalion tactical operations centers. This complex but highly efficient concept provides the best possible coverage of the TAOR and is instrumental in the prompt delivery of fire support when requested by an infantry unit.

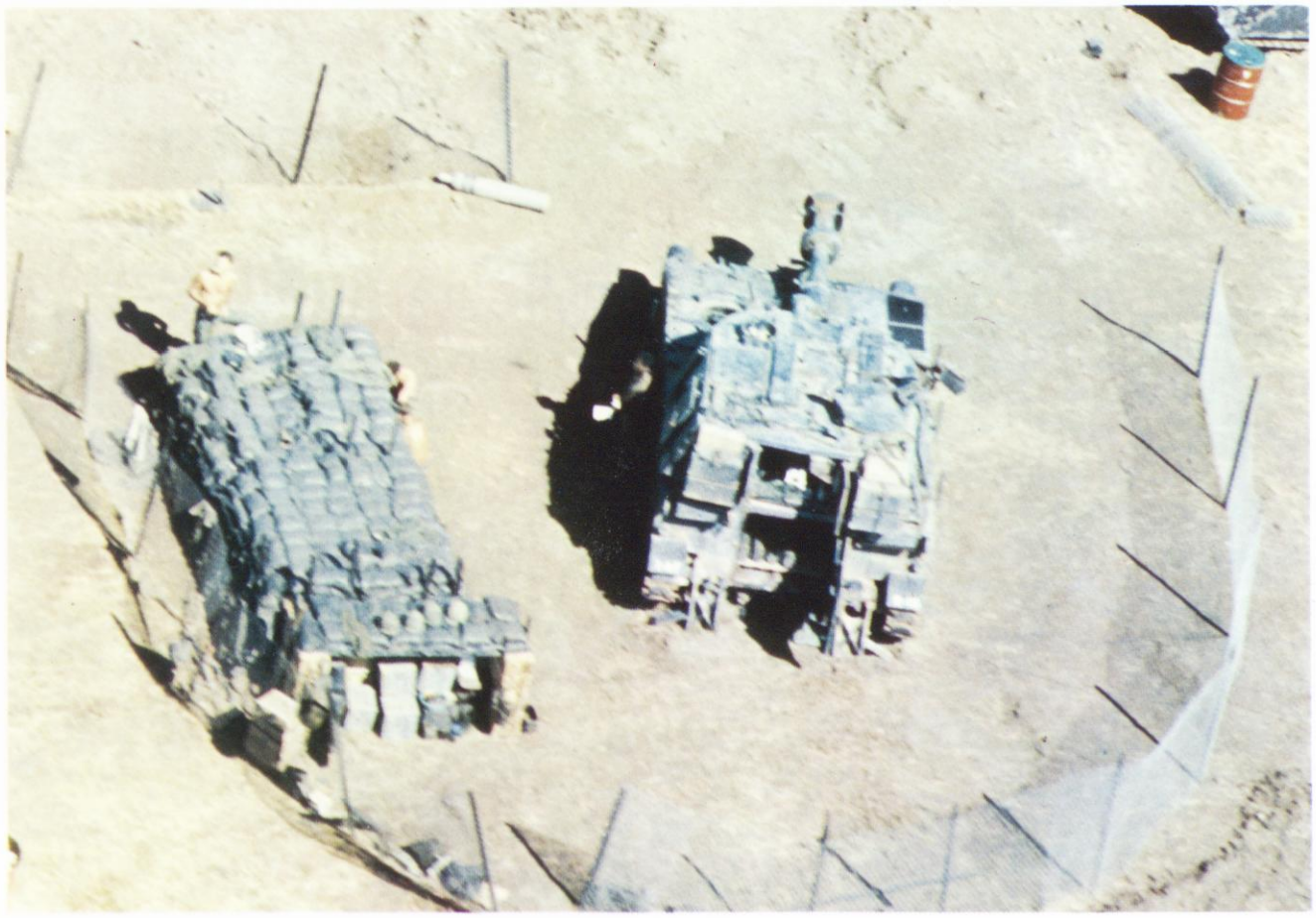
Fear of the BIG RED ONE ARTILLERY has done much to deteriorate the morale of the enemy forces and to weaken the Viet Cong infrastructure throughout the Division's area of responsibility. Hoi Chanhs often testify that they decided to join forces with the government of the Republic of South Vietnam because of the demoralizing and effective fire of the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY.

BIG RED ONE ARTILLERY has compiled a highly commendable record since its arrival in Vietnam in October 1965. The timely and accurate fire support is the result of constant effort by all members of the artillery team to maintain a state of excellence in their job performance and in their equipment. Never satisfied with the present level of performance, 1st Division Artillerymen strive for improvement in every facet of artillery operations.

Twenty-four hours a day the big guns of the BIG RED ONE are readied and on target within seconds to support the infantryman. And the infantryman has come to depend on the *"King of Battle"* to help him through some fierce battles.

A 155mm self-propelled howitzer sits behind an RPG protective screen in a fire support base.

Sp6 Jay G. Smith



Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

SUPPORT COMMAND

BY SP4 RICK HESSE

THE AMERICAN SOLDIER in Vietnam receives the best equipment, the best in supplies and services, and the best medical attention of any combatant in history. And helping to make this possible for the men of the BIG RED ONE is the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION'S SUPPORT COMMAND.

Commanded by Colonel William L. Webb, Jr., Carlisle, Pa., SUPPORT COMMAND is made up of three major components: the 1st Supply and Transport Battalion, the 701st Maintenance Battalion, and the 1st Medical Battalion.

As its name implies, the mission of SUPPORT COMMAND is to support the men of the Division. This includes the supply and resupply of ammunition, weapons, clothing, food and equipment; the repair and replacement of equipment; and medical support.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Nestor L. Berrios, Ft. Buchanan, P.R., Executive Officer of SUPPORT COMMAND, the men of the command not only supply those items for existence and the ability to engage in combat, but also consider it their duty to see that troops receive items that improve living conditions. "The fact that a soldier can spend the day on operations and then come back to an NDP for a shower, a set of clean fatigues and an ice-cold glass of Kool-Aid is a tremendous morale booster," he said.

The BIG RED ONE soldier of today need not visit SUPPORT COMMAND for assistance. All of the command' functions, from dental care to repair of helicopters and howitzers, are provided the soldier wherever he may be within the Division's area of operation.

Just what is the scope of SUPPORT COMMAND'S operations? A quick look at each of the three units which make up this all-important activity will give an indication of the tremendous task of supporting a division of 17,000 troops.

1ST SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT BATTALION

The 1st Supply and Transport Battalion (S&T) is the last line of a supply pipeline that ships everything from a clean pair of socks to heavy artillery from their source in the States to the man in the field.

For example, much has been said about the 16,000 pounds of turkey the Division consumed Christmas

Div IO

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Sp6 Jay G. Smith

Pfc Tony Hallas

Day 1968. The 1st Supply and Transport Battalion, however, furnishes almost that much meat, potatoes, vegetables and other foodstuffs, including 10,000 pounds of ice, to BIG RED ONE soldiers every day of the week.

Fuel is also another large consumption item which must be supplied, and the 1st S&T supplies 500,000 gallons each week. To expedite that much fuel the unit makes use of "POL Jump Teams." These teams are used for refueling command and control helicopters, airmobile airlift vehicles and gunships, and support tactical operations throughout the Division's area of responsibility.

The team, composed of three men and its equipment, is airlifted into predesignated refueling sites where it performs its mission and then is extracted. This unique, specialized and responsive support has proven an invaluable asset to the Division's tactical efforts.

During October 1968, the 1st S&T moved a complete infantry battalion, bag and baggage, from the 1st Division area to a 9th Infantry Division location in the Delta. The BIG RED ONE's 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry was exchanged with the 9th Division's 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry (Mechanized). The entire operation took less than three days and involved more than 7,000 truck miles. And the 1st S&T accomplished the move without accident or incident.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Sp6 Jay G. Smith

A HOIST is lowered from a CH47 to a water tank below for movement to a field location.

Dedicated to the necessity of feeding, clothing and equipping every man behind a gun and keeping the Division's rolling and flying equipment fueled around the clock, the men of the 1st Supply and Transport Battalion have given and continue to give their support. Their efforts have contributed in great measure to the combat record achieved by the BIG RED ONE.

701ST MAINTENANCE BATTALION

It is the mission of the 701st Maintenance Battalion to supply needed repair parts and to maintain the Division's equipment.

Because of the climate, rough terrain and nature of its usage, all equipment supplied to the BIG RED ONE requires periodical inspection and often needs repair. And for such items as heavy artillery, this repair must be performed wherever the equipment is located. This requires a high degree of mobility as well as technical "know how" on the part of the unit's technicians.

Most repair parts are moved from the main support company to forward units by land; however, many critically needed parts are moved by fixed-wing or rotary-wing aircraft.

"We pull maintenance on everything from a typewriter to a tank," explained Specialist 4 Michael V. Waddell, Baytown, Tex., a radio-telephone operator in the operations center of the maintenance battalion in Di An.

"If we receive a call that an artillery piece needs immediate repair, we quickly dispatch a contact team to where it is. If the team decides the equipment can't be repaired in the field, we send a replacement for it and bring the damaged gun here where we can perform major repair." "In other words," he said, "we go where the action is!"

Because of their workload, men of the 701st often work fourteen or more hours per day, every day of the week, and they perform maintenance on engineer, ordnance, signal, armor, automotive and office equipment. This maintenance includes third and fourth echelon work on vehicles, to include engine replacement, a major job on large tracked vehicles.

The technical supply section provides repair parts needed for equipment, and if an odd-sized nut or special bolt is required, the section will machine it.

1ST MEDICAL BATTALION

"Ready for Everything" is the motto of the 1st Medical Battalion, the third major component of the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION'S SUPPORT COMMAND. In living up to their motto, members of the battalion have been responsible for saving many lives, often at the risk of their own.

The medical program provided by the battalion is quite extensive, but probably the service most appreciated by the infantryman is the work of the "Go Teams." "These teams," said Sergeant Major Hobart Nantz, Jr., Harlan, Ky., 1st Medical Battalion sergeant major, "consist of a medical corps officer and four enlisted men who are on constant alert." If a soldier receives a wound too serious for the company medic to treat, a call is given to the 1st Medical Battalion and a "Go Team" is on the way in minutes in an areomedical ambulance with pre-packed medical supplies."

The Sergeant Major explained that the patient is then taken to the nearest basecamp facility which has emergency and resuscitative care capabilities. If the patient's condition warrants, he can be held over until he is able to be moved to a forward hospital. "Not

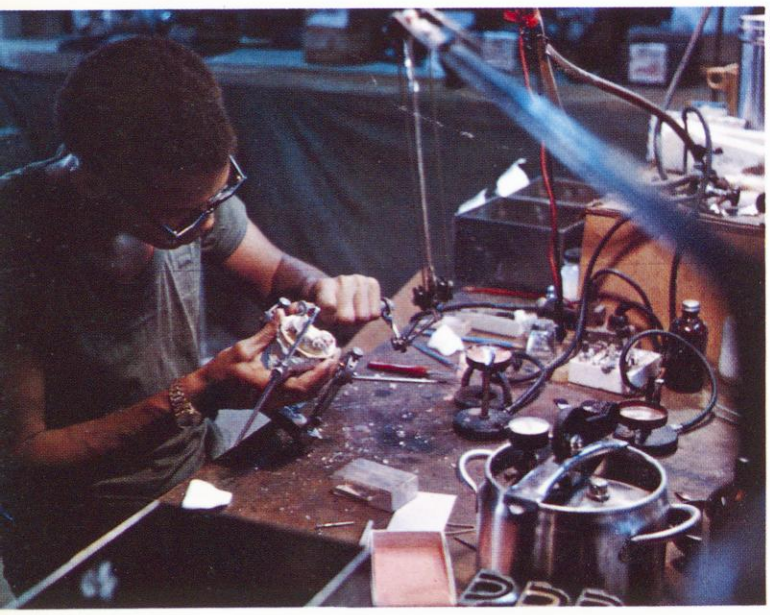
121 Sig

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

FROM HEAVY maintenance in the field to delicate tooling in basecamp. . .

Pfc Tony Hallas

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives



121 Sig

Sp6 Jay G. Smith

Ready for everything...

Pfc Tony Hallas

only does this system save lives," the Sergeant Major said, "but it also is a contributing factor to high morale in the field. The BIG RED ONE soldier knows that the best combat medical service in the world is only a few minutes away.

Other medical services provided in support of the Division include psychiatric service, optometry service, x-ray capability and dental service. An innovation in the dental program allows a dental officer and technician, along with 600 pounds of equipment and supplies to be transported to any field position within the Division, thus providing the soldier on-the-spot dental service. The result is better dental health for the soldier in addition to strengthening the combat effectiveness of the Division.

Going to the field is only part of the Medical Battalion's job. Its regular medical service to Division personnel is an extensive program which requires many hours of work by doctors and technicians. More than 6,000 out-patients are seen and treated monthly. In addition, 4,000 laboratory tests and 3,000 physical examinations are conducted monthly. And the men of medicine still find time to take care of the medical needs of approximately 22,000 Vietnamese civilians monthly under the MEDCAP program, which is the battalion's contribution to the BIG RED ONE's pacification program.

IN ADDITION TO direct support for men in the field, SUPPORT COMMAND is also responsible for the security and development of the Di An basecamp (South), and Colonel Webb additionally has operational control of the 1st Administration Company. The company, which is almost battalion size, has the mammoth task of maintaining the personnel and finance records of the division, while performing its share of the defense of Di An basecamp (South). The company's personnel insure that every BIG RED ONE soldier receives his monthly pay, whether in basecamp or a field location.

The combat capabilities of the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION are evidenced in the many battles in which the men of the Division have inflicted high casualties and resounding defeats on the enemy forces since the unit's arrival in Vietnam more than three years ago. The response of SUPPORT COMMAND in meeting the needs of the Division during this period have played a vital role in its successes and will continue to fulfill its reputation of being the best supplied and maintained division in Vietnam.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

VIETNAM BATTLES

41–45

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

TRAPEZOID I

VIETNAM BATTLES—41

THE BIG RED ONE continued Phase II of Operation TOAN THANG during late September, October, and November 1968, with reconnaissance-in-force (RIF) operations, night ambushes, civic action programs and intelligence activities. Phase II began on 7 April 1968.

Numerous caches and basecamps were discovered and destroyed, greatly hampering enemy infiltration and plans for increasing pressure against Saigon and allied elements. In operations approximately six miles west of Lai Khe in early October, the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry *Swamp Rats* killed 15 enemy soldiers with the help of firepower from the 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery, and Air Force tactical air strikes. The 2d Battalion, 18th Infantry killed three enemy soldiers in mid-October and detained eight suspects, one of which was carrying 300,000 piasters (approximately 2,500 dollars).

In a combined operation eight miles northwest of Bien Hoa Airbase in late October, elements of the Division's 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry *Blue Spaders*, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, and the 8th Regiment, 5th ARVN Infantry Division, discovered an enemy basecamp containing facilities to house and feed approximately five-hundred troops. The basecamp contained more than 2,000 gas masks plus a large cache of rocket grenade rounds with boosters, recoilless rifle rounds, mortar rounds, fragmentation and tear gas grenades, claymores, explosives with blasting caps, sniper scopes and clothing. The camp's facilities included mess kitchens with ovens, deep wells, a bicycle repair kit and sleeping accomodations.

The 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry *Rangers* discovered a huge cache of weapons and equipment four miles west of Lai Khe in early November. The cache was discovered by Private First Class Kyle Thomlinson, Freemont, Calif., who took a second look at what appeared to be an ordinary enemy bunker. The hole, only 20 yards from the battalion's command group position, produced 100 anti-personnel mines, 1,050 hand grenades and a five gallon can of C-4 explosive and TNT. A further search uncovered 2 rocket grenades (RPG-7's) and 67 RPG-2's, mortar and grenade fuses, cans of explosives, 50 recoilless rifle rounds, 19 individual weapons, 550 pounds of medical supplies and seven cases of insect repellent.

In late September, intelligence reported enemy activity in the Trapezoid area, so called because of its physical shape. The area extends from the west side of Ben Cat northwestward to the Michelin Rubber Plantation.

Elements under operational control of the Division's 3d Brigade, in conjunction with the 3d Republic of Vietnam Marines, began conducting combined operations on 3 October in the Trapezoid area. Units involved in the operation included the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry (-); 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry (-); 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry (-); Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Artillery; and Delta Battery, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery.

Two Fire Support Bases (FSB), Lead and Gold, were established by the infantry in the Trapezoid on 3 October. During the next seven days the infantry conducted numerous reconnaissance-in-force patrols and night ambush operations.

Fire Support Base Gold was established just west of the village of Ap Ben San by the 1/18th. Fire Support Base Lead was established by the 1/28th to the north of FSB Gold, and west of the village of Ap Bo Cang. The 1/16th was inserted to the south of FSB Lead.

The most significant contacts of the week-long operation took place when elements of the 1/18th and the 1/28th engaged well-entrenched groups of North Vietnamese regulars in two separate incidents.

The first of the two actions began at 0920 when Company C, 18th Infantry surprised an unknown number of enemy as the unit was proceeding to a resupply point.

"We apparently caught them off-guard," said Colonel Ronald J. Gillis, Portland, Ore., commander of the Battalion. "We walked into a basecamp...interrupting their breakfast because there was food for about 20 people."

Cloverleafs were sent out to the right and left of the basecamp area and contact was made almost immediately with a group of enemy soldiers. "Apparently

AN ENEMY WEAPONS and food cache is discovered by the 1st Bn, 26th Inf.

2a Sp6 Jay G. Smith

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Sp6 Jay G. Smith

they had left a stay-behind force to hold up movement," recalled the colonel.

Because of heavy vegetation the unit was unable to use gunships or artillery. "It was so dense," explained Colonel Gillis, "that you couldn't see more than two or three feet at any time. We couldn't use LAWs (Light Anti-Tank Weapons), so we called in artillery but there was such heavy overhead cover that it just didn't have any effect on these people."

After calling to the dug-in-enemy to Chieu Hoi, without success, the unit advanced on each position with hand grenades, small arms fire, and finally resorted to hand-to-hand fighting to route the enemy force.

The 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry made light contact in the first two days after entering the Trapezoid. At one point it sighted a 150-man enemy force carrying packs on their backs. Because of the distance from the enemy force, the 1/28th called artillery in on the group. The enemy element scattered, many of them dropping their packs, which turned out to be 75-pound bags of rice.

At 1400 on 5 October, as the 1/28th began a reconnaissance-in-force back toward FSB Gold, it was directed to search an area where a gunship had spotted four or five enemy soldiers in a bomb crater.

As Delta neared the site the point man walked upon two freshly constructed bunkers which were well camouflaged. As the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Carman D. Negaard, Alexandria, Va., explained it, "They were so well camouflaged the point man had to look down into the firing port on one to realize what it was." The enemy had set up effective fire lanes and their bunkers were constructed with two feet of overhead cover, made up of one foot of logs and another foot of dirt. The original sod was placed on top to blend in with the surrounding area.

Heavy resistance was then encountered by the unit. Airstrikes were called in on the bunker positions and medium and heavy artillery pounded the area throughout the night. On the morning of the 6th no opposition was encountered.

On 7 October, elements of the 2d Battalion, 16th Infantry discovered a huge supply cache in the Trapezoid area where it had set up a remain-over-night position. The RON position, on closer inspection, turned out to be a large enemy basecamp and hospital complex. It contained 3,600 pounds of medical supplies, 1,100 concussion grenades, one-hundred and fifty 82mm mortar rounds, 50 Chicom grenades, 400 RPG-7 charges, 584 RPG-2 rounds, 2,000 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, 100 rounds of 60mm mortar, 400 RPG-7 boosters, six anti-tank mines, seventy-five 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, 102 RPG-7 rounds, six "38" Smith and Wesson pistols, 5,000 grenade fuses, 1,000 fuse lighters, 400 US rifle grenades, and numerous other supplies and equipment.

During the seven day RIF and ambush operations, 18 B-52 strikes hit the area, destroying 438 bunker complexes. Also numerous basecamps were located and destroyed, enemy documents were discovered, and more than 3,300 pounds of rice were confiscated. During the engagement 19 enemy bodies were found, with blood trails and other evidence pointing to many more killed or wounded which the enemy managed to carry off.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

FSPB

Julie

VIETNAM BATTLES—42

ENEMY ACTIVITY HAD been noted in the northern section of the Division's area of operation, and in early October intelligence indicated the possibility of the presence of the 1st North Vietnamese Army Division in the vicinity of the Fishook Area, Tong Le Chon, and immediately across the Cambodian border.

On 18 October elements of the BIG RED ONE established Fire Support Patrol Bases (FSPB) Rita, Julie, and Dot in the area, from which reconnaisance-in-force and sweep operations were conducted to determine the presence of the enemy division. The FSPBs were located to the west and northwest of Tong Le Chon, below the Cambodian border in the northeast corner of Tay Ninh Province. They were placed astride a main infiltration route which runs south through War Zone C into the Saigon complex.

The 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry (-) was airlifted without contact into an area from which FSB Dot was established. The 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry (Mechanized), moved overland to FSB Rita. During its move light resistance was encountered.

On the afternoon of the 18th, the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry (-) was airlifted into position and FSB Julie was established. The following day, the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry's Troop B was deployed with the 1st Brigade Forward Command Post near Tong Le Chon.

On 25 October harassment and interdiction (H&I) fire from FSPB Dot by Delta Battery, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery resulted in 128 secondary explosions near the Cambodian border, northwest of FSPB Julie. During the same evening elements of the 2/28th observed 12 secondary explosions in an area halfway between FSPB Rita and Dot during a period of 81mm mortar H&I fire. Throughout the evening of 25 October an airborne forward air controller reported extensive vehicular traffic on the Cambodian side of the border.

During the first days after moving into the area, fields of fire were set up, overhead cover was constructed and perimeter wire established, strengthening the FSPBs in order to withstand large-scale attacks. During the daytime, RIFs were carried out in and around the immediate area of each base to determine enemy activity, locate basecamps, and search for general signs of enemy movement.

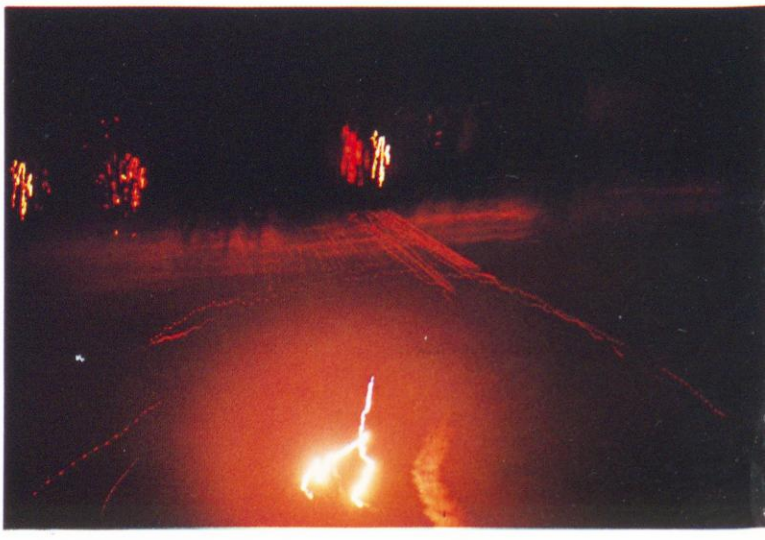
The 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry conducted operations out of FSPB Dot during the period of 18 through 27 October. Light contact was encountered on three separate occasions but Dot did not receive an attack on its position. During the next 23 days indirect fire missions were conducted from Dot in support of Julie and Rita.

Julie, northern-most of the three bases, was located in an area containing high brush and trees. During the first few days after arrival men of the 2/28th worked well into each night clearing fields of fire, using special engineer landing zone clearing teams to set charges and blow large trees in the area and to cover some of the bomb strike areas to eliminate "humps" in their fields of fire.

On 20 October reconnaissance-in-force operations were begun out of Julie and according to Captain Richard L. Rogers, Dallas Tex., commanding officer, Company C, 2/28th, "enemy activity was noted and we knew they were checking out our NDP."

On the 21st Captain Rogers' company was ordered to the site of a helicopter crash to secure the downed aircraft, when the 1st Platoon, led by First Lieutenant Joseph G. Montoya, Alberquerque, N.M., overran a small enemy RPG outpost team of three men.

Cpt Edward Yee

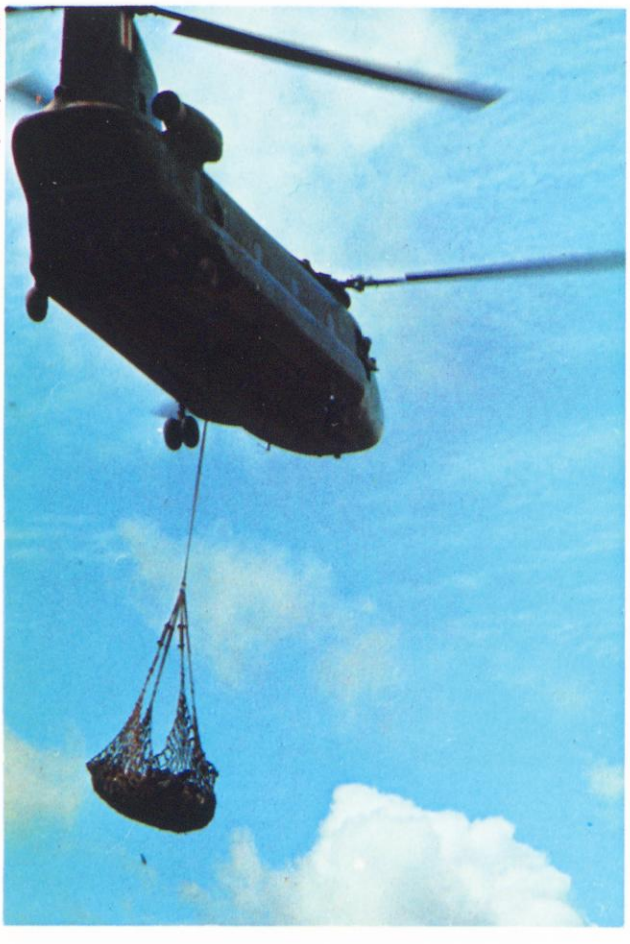


MINIGUN fire rakes Julie's perimeter.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

THE 1ST BN, 2d Inf recons in the area of FSPB Julie.

Sp6 Jay G. Smith



A CH47 provides quick resupply to field units.

"We spotted them from about 75 meters away," said Lieutenant Montoya. "At first we just spotted the grass moving. As we moved up, my right flank spotted the actual VC, and they opened up."

"Quick and aggressive action by Lieutenant Montoya and his men," said Captain Rogers, "helped them overrun and kill these three VC. We did draw additional fire from what I estimated as a squad of ten men, possibly as many as fifteen. This was coming from across a steam bed that was directly to our front. I maneuvered my second platoon up to cover while I attempted to move Lieutenant Montoya's platoon across the stream bed to the other side. I was able to get one squad across, and then I moved the rest of the platoon across. At this time they could see bunkers and heavy movement on the other side."

It was decided to pull the element back.

"When we pulled my squad back across," said Lieutenant Montoya, "I checked out the three dead VC and noticed one man had his pants rolled up. There were no scratches on his legs or anything of that sort, so I knew that they couldn't have moved too far without getting some scratches or something. If they had moved a long distance he would have had his pants rolled down. I told Captain Rogers there must be a basecamp nearby."

The suspected area was then hit by friendly artillery and airstrikes, and during the next few days, until 26 October, the *Black Lions* continued with RIF's. On the 23rd, FSPB Julie was hit in its northern sector with RPGs and mortars.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Wayne L. Yeager

SOLDIERS FROM the 2/16th pass captured communist grenades down into a bomb crater. The cache was discovered by the unit while on patrol west of Lai Khe during Operation Toan Thang.

Because of the incident on the 21st with the RPG outpost team and the RPG and mortar attack on the 23d, without any activity on the enemy's part on the 22d and 24th, Captain Rogers felt that a pattern of being hit every other night had been established. On the night of the 25th he cautioned his platoon leaders to be especially alert.

At 0030 hours on the morning of 26 October Lieutenant Colonel Vernon C. Coffey, Kansas City, Kan., commanding officer, 2/28th, received a report that a man on a listening post had his claymore jerked or pulled out of his hand.

It was obvious that there was movement by enemy elements in the area. At 0100, as the incident was being investigated further, Julie was hit by 50 to 80 rounds of 82mm mortar and 60mm mortar fire. The mortar barrage was followed by a strong RPG attack, followed by additional mortars.

The attack began from the southwest, and the activity picked up rapidly. Movement became so strong and intense that two listening posts, one from the B Company sector and one from Company C, were pulled back into the basecamp's perimeter. Eventually all listening posts in Bravo and Charlie Company's sector were pulled back into the perimeter. Alpha Company listening posts, however, were still out, and a night ambush position was located 700 meters west of Julie.

The enemy element, which was estimated at four battalions of NVA regulars, continued its push on Julie. Firing 81mm mortars and M-79 grenades had no immediate effect in deterring their attack. Activity continued to increase all along the wire with groups of enemy soldiers sighted working in and around the wire. Bangalore torpedoes and other types of explosives were used by the NVA in an attempt to breach the perimeter.

Artillery concentrations were called in but because of the ambush position located to the west of the NDP, support was limited.

As the attack continued on Julie from the southwest, the NDP began receiving a second attack, this one coming from the west side of the position. The ambush position to the west reported large groups of people moving past its position, up to 50 at a time, moving toward the NDP. Reports came in later from the patrol that smaller groups were coming back through carrying dead and wounded enemy soldiers.

The attack continued with pressure exerted against the fire support base at all times, until finally, at 0330 the NVA were successful in breaching the perimeter wire. One NVA soldier, who made it inside the wire, was killed by Private First Class Bill Johnson, Rockford, Ill., a medic with the *Black Lions*. "While crawling from one bunker to another treating shrapnel wounds," explained PFC Johnson, "I came face to face with an NVA soldier. I didn't have time to think, so I acted fast." PFC Johnson killed the enemy in hand-to-hand combat.

Captain Rogers had felt the enemy would hit the NDP in mass charges. He recalls, however, that "they came in small groups, three-man cells or two groups of three to six men, and this was the way we were picking them up coming into the wire. They were able to sneak through the wire and get in closer than we liked," he recalls. "However, I did not feel that there was such a significant force that it was worthwhile to pop our claymores."

Because of the closeness of the ambush patrol and the listening posts of Alpha Company, which were still

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

out, illumination firing was held to a minimum to prevent their disclosure to the enemy.

In repelling the attacking force within the perimeter area, the *Black Lions* used hand grenades, M-16s and M-79s, and machinegun fire.

The attack continued until 0530, then began to dwindle. During this period, Colonel Coffey ordered Lieutenant Montoya's platoon to link up with the ambush patrol and bring them back to the NDP.

All through the night the ambush had been able to make reports, undetected by the enemy, concerning enemy movement. This continued until early morning. Then, one NVA returning from the fight at Julie walked directly into the ambush. To save his position, the ambush leader had to fire, killing the enemy. Then a second NVA walked into the ambush. He was shot also, but as he fell dying, he pulled a grenade which exploded, killing one of the patrol members and wounding two others.

As Lieutenant Montoya's platoon moved out from Julie to link up with the patrol they ran into very strong contact. The fighting became so intense they were forced to return to the NDP. "We were 50 to 75 meters out when we hit an element that may have been trying to come through the wire," said the lieutenant. "I noticed that the NVA had their mortars set up approximately 150 to 200 meters outside the wire, and I could see the flashes from the mortar tubes popping up." This NVA force turned out to be the main element of the beginning of a second attack on Julie.

The lieutenant reported the situation to his company and shot an azimuth to the mortars. Counter mortar fire immediately silenced them.

The action lasted until 0630 when the NVA again broke contact. The movement outside the perimeter by the 1st Platoon in the attempt to link up with the ambush patrol had taken the enemy by surprise. The move completely silenced all incoming RPGs, 75mm recoilless rifles, 82mm and 60mm mortars and had completely disrupted the strategy of their attack.

At 0730, a company size element was moved out from the NDP to make a sweep of the area, and Lieutenant Montoya's platoon was sent out to bring the ambush patrol back in. Fierce resistance was encountered from snipers and small units of NVA still in the area. The enemy soldiers chose to fight to the death rather than being taken alive. "We were stunned at the tenacity of these VC and NVA that were wounded and trapped!" exclaimed Captain Rogers. "They knew they were trapped! They pulled the grenades at close range, fired on us at extremely close range...five to ten feet in several instances. One VC threw two grenades at Lieutenant Montoya and his radio operator, and only their fast reactions saved a number of the troops. They returned the grenades and got into a grenade-pitching contest, and were finally able to knock this man out."

During the early evening hours of 26 October the NVA again attacked but were easily beaten off. The suicide attempt on FSPB Julie took the lives of 128 enemy soldiers. US casualties numbered eight.

Pfc Dominic Sondy

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

FSPB

Rita

VIETNAM BATTLES—43

ON THE MORNING of 30 October, the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry replaced the 2/28th at FSPB Julie, and the following day the *Black Scarves* made contact with the enemy. Supported by artillery and light fire teams, the BIG RED ONE unit killed 42 enemy soldiers while sustaining five US wounded.

Meanwhile, on 18 October, the 5th Battalion, 60th Infantry (Mechanized) was moved overland to the area where FSPB Rita was established. Other units occupying this position were the 3d Platoon, Company B, 2d Battalion, 34th Armor; Battery C, 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery (155); and Battery B, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery (105). Later on 21 October, the 5/60 was redesignated as the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 16th Infantry. On 26 October the 1/16th concluded operations in the area and moved overland to Quan Loi. The *Iron Rangers* were replaced at Rita by Troop B, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry.

On 27 October, Company B, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry joined the friendly elements at Rita and for the first two days conducted small reconnaissance-in-force missions in and around the fire support base. On 29 October the base received three mortar attacks. During the third attack a team from D Troop, 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry arrived to assist in locating the mortar positions. During their reconnaissance of the area two enemy basecamps were sighted within 1,000 meters of Rita. Airstrikes were called in on the enemy basecamps that afternoon, and on the following morning, 30 October, B Company, 1/26th sent a patrol to the area of the strikes. Documents were found which indicated that a VC unit from Binh Long was present to assist and guide NVA soldiers through the area to the Saigon complex.

At various times during the evening of 31 October and early morning hours of 1 November, reconnaissance fires were conducted. "This was done," said Major Allen A. Nauman, Casper, Wyo., executive officer of the 1/26th, and ground force commander at Rita, "to keep 'Charlie' off guard, and to keep him guessing as to exactly where we were located and what our mission was."

At 0340 on 1 November, reconnaissance fire was begun in and around the fire support base itself. Almost simultaneously Rita began receiving heavy RPG fire beyond the north and northwest corner of the NDP.

Immediately, supporting fire was called from FSPB Dot, a "Spooky" gunship and airstrikes were requested, and counter mortar fire from inside Rita began. According to Specialist 4 Pat Stevens, Carmichael, Calif., a mortarman with B Company, "We threw everything down those tubes but the kitchen sink."

Heavy RPG fire was taken during the first 20 minutes of the attack and two armored cavalry assault vehicles (ACAV's) were knocked out. Taking advantage of the knocked out armor, the NVA began their first ground assault on the base. As the enemy element began his move to penetrate the perimeter, heavy RPG and small arms fire was received from the south and southwest of the NDP.

CIVIC ACTION programs play a significant role in the mission of the BIG RED ONE.

Cpt Edward Yee

121 Sig

MEMBERS of the Division check a map during Operation Toan Thang.

"You could tell by the way the NVA approached the wire," stated Major Nauman, "that they had conducted careful rehearsals. They had been well trained and they knew generally what they were facing when they came to the fire support base."

During direct support fire from within Rita, a 105mm round had earlier blown a small hole in the perimeter wire on the western edge of the base. Despite continuous available direct fire into area, the NVA kept putting one man at a time through this hole until they had four personnel inside the wire. Two RPG rounds were fired by the infiltrators and one hit a 155mm self-propelled weapon, knocking it out. Two NVA crawled onto one of the knocked out ACAV's and started to turn the .50 caliber machinegun around against the friendly troops but alert infantrymen cut them down before they could complete their acts. All four infiltrators were quickly killed.

Fifty enemy soldiers then breached the perimeter wire and made their way about 45 meters into the howitzer positions of the 8th of the 6th Artillery. Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Rogers, Olympia, Wash., commanding officer, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery immediately left his position at the Tactical Operations Center (TOC), from which he had been directing artillery support for Rita, and moved to the area of the heavy infiltration.

Due to the heavy volume of enemy fire Colonel Rogers crawled from howitzer to howitzer shouting direct fire commands and encouraged the men to fight.

The attack continued with all available supporting fire and direct fire being poured on the enemy. According to First Sergeant Ira Whitaker, Lawton, Okla.,

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

a member of the 8/6th, "We fired .50 caliber machine-guns from the tops of our M-109 howitzers and simultaneously fired direct artillery fire at the onrushing enemy."

As Colonel Rogers was leading reinforcements from one howitzer to another which had received a direct hit by an RPG round, he was knocked down by an exploding RPG round which landed nearby. It inflicted a shrapnel wound to his face, but he continued to lead the artillerymen, encouraging them by word and deed to fight back.

"Colonel Rogers distinguished himself," recalled Major Nauman, "by moving throughout the battery area to assist in every way, from actually loading weapons to setting fuses and encouraging his men to continue on through the fight."

A group of NVA soldiers were spotted behind a log pile in front of one of the company's howitzers. In attempting a flanking movement on the enemy, Colonel Rogers was again knocked to the ground by an RPG round, and this time received a wound in the leg. He managed to pull the other man with him, who had been seriously wounded, back to a position of relative safety. He then returned to the area to lead the men, forcing the enemy to withdraw to a position outside the fire support base perimeter.

Sp6 Jay G. Smith

By 0420 the initial assault was beaten off, but the fire support base continued to receive sporadic RPG and small arms fire from all around the west, northwest and then the southwest corner of the perimeter.

An estimated 80 per cent of the NVA that rushed the wire in the first assault were armed with RPGs and were carrying RPGs or satchel charges on their backs. "The initial rush was believed to have come from a sapper battalion," said Major Nauman. "Very few NVA were carrying AK-47's, and very little small arms fire was coming from them."

At 0515, a second attack was formed but was quickly beaten off. Airstrikes came on station almost immediately after the first assault had ended, hitting the north and west side of the perimeter. Indirect support fire from Rita silenced the RPG fire coming from the southwest corner of the perimeter. Following the airstrikes, aerial rocket artillery from the 1st Cavalry Division was called in and the choppers ran their strikes 10 meters from the perimeter out to the woodline surrounding the FSPB.

The fire support base continued to receive sporadic RPG fire and some small arms fire as daylight began to break over the area. At daybreak six rounds of 122mm rocket fire hit the base, followed by ten to twenty 82mm mortar rounds. Then the NVA made their final assault.

In 15 minutes it was all over. Close indirect fire support out of Dot, plus the .50 calibers, the 90mm's and the direct fire from Rita was too much for the enemy forces.

By 0645 most of the fire had died down from the woodline and only sporadic fire was observed from the southwest and western part of the perimeter. Airstrikes were continued on the southwest and west side of the fire support base in an attempt to cut the NVA off from withdrawing and pulling their dead and wounded out.

As Major Nauman recalled later, "The most amazing part about the entire firefight was that the artillery continued with direct fire for almost three hours into the woodline. It would silence initial RPG fire but no sooner had we silenced them than five or ten minutes later it would again begin in the same location."

In defense of Fire Support Base Rita, 1,300 rounds of artillery direct fire were expended, 800 rounds of indirect artillery fire, between 50,000 and 60,000 rounds of .50 caliber, 478 rounds of 81mm mortar, and the beehive rounds of the 105 battery were used. In addition, countless rounds of M-16 fire tore into the enemy's ranks.

In the initial search of the area, immediately in and around the wire itself, 27 NVA bodies, two AK-47 rifles, five RPG launchers and from 150 to 200 RPG rounds were found. A sweep of the outer area was not conducted and a body count was not received from outside the fire support base. Unconfirmed reports however, from forward air controllers flying in the area and *Darkhorse* elements, indicated a possible 400 to 500 bodies lying in the woods around the fire support base. The number the enemy actually managed to carry off will never be known. Seventeen US soldiers were killed.

At 1530 on 1 November the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry was reinserted to conduct operations out of FSPB Rita but the heavy fighting was over. By 10 November the units had departed the Tong Le Chon area and FSPB's Julie, Rita and Dot were turned over to ARVN ranger units.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

TRAPEZOID II

VIETNAM BATTLES—44

DURING THE NEXT few weeks following the enemy's defeat at Fire Support Bases Julie and Rita, light action was reported in the BIG RED ONE's area of operation. Then in mid-November, attention was again focused on the Trapezoid, this time in two areas to the south of FSB Lead and Gold.

The 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, which had assisted in the defense of FSPB Julie, was air-inserted to the west of Ben Cat in the lower quadrant of the Trapezoid and established Fire Support Base Cantigny on 19 November. Shortly after the insertion an element of Delta Company was sent out to sweep the area, and it immediately came under fire from an estimated NVA squad. Throughout the rest of the day the battalion was harassed by enemy small arms fire from around the perimeter.

The area in which Cantigny was located contained six-foot high elephant grass and heavy vegetation which had to be cleared to set up firing lanes and bunker positions. Due to the harassing fires from the enemy forces throughout the day, the 2/28th was unable to begin digging in before 1700, after having been able to put up only one strand of wire before darkness fell. Listening posts were set up outside the base perimeter.

The unit was still digging its bunker positions when, at 0230, it began receiving mortar rounds, followed by a barrage of automatic weapons and small arms fire, RPG rounds and concussion grenades. Under cover of the heavy firepower, the enemy element advanced on the *Black Lions'* position. But the NVA had learned a lesson in their defeat at Fire Support Bases Julie and Rita in the previous month. Instead of "prepping" Cantigny before attacking, the enemy moved in on the fire support base with the first barrage.

Cpt Edward Yee

Counter mortar fire was immediately placed on the mortar positions as the listening posts were pulled in. As First Lieutenant Celso R. Chavez, El Paso, Tex., a platoon leader with Company C, recalls, "Our listening posts picked up movement immediately after the first mortar barrage. The NVA had infiltrated right up to them through the elephant grass." Heavy artillery was then requested, and an Air Force "Spooky" gunship was called on the scene. Within minutes it began spewing deadly minigun fire around the base's perimeter.

Some of the attackers made it to the front line bunkers but were cut down by friendly fire. The battle raged until 0430 before it began to slack off. By 0500 it was over, and the enemy retreated, leaving 12 dead behind. Five of the NVA soldiers were killed inside the wire, five were killed on the wire, and two were found outside the perimeter. During a sweep of the area, trails were found indicating that the enemy had carried off many dead and wounded soldiers.

ON 29 NOVEMBER, the *Black Lions* were moved from Cantigny to an area seven miles west-southwest of Ben Cat, where they established Fire Support Base Junction City. The following day they were hit by an estimated NVA battalion, and in three and one-half hours of furious fighting, the enemy lost 44.

The battle began at 0230 on 30 November, only a few minutes after the unit had finished clearing the area of undergrowth, setting up fire lanes and constructing bunkers and fighting positions. Again, as they had done at Cantigny, the NVA attacked under the initial shield of mortar fire. As the mortar rounds began to land, the enemy force advanced to the southwest corner and east side of the perimeter wire, and began laying down a devastating base of fire with machineguns and RPGs.

Their tactics did not work however. Firing M-79 grenades and M-16s, the men of the 2/28th managed to hold them off. Bravo Company's machinegun opened up, and the battalion's weapons platoon began dropping 81mm mortars directly on the perimeter wire. But the fighting became more furious until finally the enemy succeeded in breaching the perimeter. Sixteen NVA soldiers penetrated the southwest side, but were cut down before reaching any of the bunkers or fighting positions.

Specialist 4 David L. Thomas, Quincey, Calif., was credited with killing eight of the enemy soldiers, three of whom were within eight feet of his bunker before being stopped.

Company C had been placed in a night ambush position outside the perimeter wire earlier in the evening of the 29th and as the fighting continued, many enemy soldiers began moving past its position, coming back from the battle at the fire support base. The company killed five enemy soldiers as they attempted to pass through its area. Lieutenant Chavez was with the ambush position that night.

"At 0345 they started moving down Highway 14 in two's and three's," he recalls. "They were retreating, then later on we didn't have any more movement. The next morning, however, we found a sign which the fleeing enemy had put up between us and the fire support base. It pointed out that our ambush position was up ahead."

By 0600 the fighting was over. In addition to 44 enemy killed, a search of the area produced two detainees, 21 AK-47 rifles, four light machineguns and seven RPG launchers. Blood trails were found leading from Junction City out to the area of Charlie Company's ambush position.

121 Sig

SP4 WILLIAM BELL, Co B, 2d Bn, 28th Inf inspects enemy weapons captured during action at FSB Junction City.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

LOC NINH V

VIETNAM BATTLES—45

PRIOR TO THE ACTION at Fire Support Base Junction City, activity had again begun to pick up in the area in and around Loc Ninh, and on 28 November contact was made with a large North Vietnamese Army force there.

Responsibility for a large portion of the Division's northern area of operation, which included Loc Ninh, was assumed during the month of October 1968 by the 1st Air Cavalry Division, formerly assigned to the I Corps area in northern South Vietnam. The 2d Battalion (Mechanized), 2d Infantry joined forces with an infantry battalion from the 5th ARVN Division near Loc Ninh and was placed under the operational control of the Air Cavalry.

The area in and around Loc Ninh had been the site of four major battles during previous months, the last two taking place during August and September 1968. Because of the area's proximity to Cambodia, and the densely vegetated terrain which provides easy cover to the enemy elements, it is a favorite route of North Vietnamese Army troops attempting to infiltrate strategic areas in South Vietnam's southern zones.

The movement of the 1st Air Cavalry to the area was designed to place additional troops across this main infiltration route, and to help block possible enemy efforts to launch a new offensive against the capital city complex.

The 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry was in its basecamp at Lai Khe when it was alerted to move to Loc Ninh. It proceeded to An Loc, and on 2 November, after staying at An Loc for a week, Company C, commanded by Captain Thomas J. Kelly, Liberty, N.Y., was ordered to aid the ARVN battalion which was in contact with enemy elements approximately nine kilometers to the northeast of Loc Ninh.

As Charlie Company moved into the area, it was directed to secure a landing zone (LZ) for a dustoff of wounded ARVN troops. Completing the evacuation Charlie Company then proceeded without incident to the ARVN's RON position four kilometers northeast of the junction of highways 14a and 13.

During the day of the 27th, and that night, Charlie Company did not make contact with the enemy. At 0830 the following morning, however, as the unit was preparing to move, it received twelve 60mm rounds of mortar fire coming from the north. It was 28 November 1968. Thanksgiving Day.

The unit moved in the direction from which the enemy fire was coming. Approximately 300 meters from the RON site the 1st Platoon, which was in the lead, spotted a group of "rubber" workers and a rubber working truck. As the platoon began to maneuver to form a blocking force to check the workers, 14 enemy soldiers were spotted to the west of their position on the company's left flank.

The 2d Platoon quickly moved up on line and headed in the direction of the enemy. As the two platoons advanced on the element, the armored personnel carriers (APC's) immediately began to receive automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenade fire from four or five positions staggered among the rubber trees. The unit quickly dismounted its ground troops

Div IO

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

and returned fire with .50 caliber machineguns.

The 3d Platoon then moved up to the left of the 1st and 2d Platoons and began putting fixing fires on the enemy. "The 1st and 2d Platoons opened fire to the west with heavy machineguns, small arms and anti-tank weapons," explained Captain Kelly, "while the 3d platoon maneuvered to the high ground on the southern flank to form an 'L'-shaped crossfire."

Only the machinegunners and drivers remained on the tracks as the infantry used fire and maneuver tactics to assault the enemy positions. First Lieutenant James W. Clark, Reno, Nev., Charlie Company's 2d Platoon leader, described the maneuver tactics this way: "We found that the best technique was to fire directly on the bunkers with our .50 calibers, which partially blew away the overhead cover. Then as we got close, the infantrymen finished them off with grenades. We then pushed on with the assault."

Two APC's took hits from enemy RPG rounds, but the counterattack by Charlie Company began to pick up speed. The enemy, which was estimated to be a reinforced NVA company, was well dug in with its bunkers built very low in the ground, enabling them to fire their weapons without exposing themselves.

As Charlie Company moved forward it engaged the enemy entrenched in more than two dozen bunkers, killing more than 40 NVA. After the initial assault was completed, cloverleafs were sent out to the front, and additional enemy soldiers were encountered while they were trying to escape or carry away their wounded and equipment. Ten of the fleeing enemy were killed.

By 1130 the fighting ended. Charlie Company regrouped and at 1300 began to push toward the west. Shortly after the unit began to move, machinegun fire was heard southeast of their position. The company quickly changed direction, and with the 1st and 3d Platoons on line, the 2d Platoon in rear security, it moved toward the firing.

After moving 150 meters it ran into another section of the bunker complex which had been overrun that morning, and immediately began receiving a high volume of RPG-7 fire. The unit continued its advance, but then an APC took a direct hit from an RPG round and caught fire. There were several explosions from the track's gas tank, 90mm recoilless rifles and C4 explosives. The unit withdrew 150 meters to escape the flames and bursting rounds of the exploding vehicle, then called for artillery support, airstrikes and helicopter gunships.

Following the artillery and airstrike support, Charlie Company moved forward again. Light resistance continued but the enemy soldiers were beginning to falter, and by 1530 the battle was over. Twenty enemy soldiers lay dead, many more were wounded.

Charlie Company was then ordered to join Alpha Company which had received the order at noon to start its move from An Loc to Loc Ninh. At 1900 the two units linked up and moved to their RON position, four kilometers north of An Loc.

The night of 28 November was quiet. On the morning of the 29th, both companies moved out simultaneously on separate reconnaisance-in-force missions. Charlie Company moved on a northerly azimuth from Highway 14a, and Alpha Company covered an area to its northeast. They were to link up in an area north of the RON position of the previous night.

The two units reconned the area for three hours, then Alpha, which had not made contact, turned westward to link up with Charlie Company.

Charlie Company had moved through the area of contact from the previous day's battle to check what was left of the enemy bunker complex. There were indications of considerable movement by NVA soldiers, but no contact was made. "We found that some of the bodies had been buried," recalled Lieutenant Clark, "and some of the equipment retrieved. There were 'Ho Chi Minh' sandal prints throughout the area, and the enemy had planted booby traps on the graves that had been dug during the night."

After going over the area, Charlie Company continued to move northward. At 1130, 700 meters north of the bunker complex, movement was spotted to the front. Firing their .50 caliber machineguns, the tracks pushed forward. As they moved in on the position, they began receiving small arms and RPG fire from the west.

Alpha Company, in the meantime, had made its turn and was beginning to move in for the link up with Charlie Company. It was 200 meters from Company C's position when the firing began.

First Lieutenant Hugh O. Evans, Seattle, Alpha Company's 1st Platoon leader, recalls what happened: "We came up on their right flank and formed more or less an 'L'-shaped line of attack. At this time we began to receive heavy resistance from small arms fire, machinegun fire, .50 calibers, RPG and 60mm mortar fire. In spite of the heavy volume of fire we were able to pinpoint most of the enemy positions."

Lieutenant Colonel George D. Greer, Charleston, S.C., the battalion commander, had directed that Alpha Company initiate the action on the 29th, and as Company C and the headquarters element put down a base of fire, Alpha and the reconnaissance element began the assault.

They began receiving heavy automatic weapons and RPG fire from 15 to 20 meters to their front, then from 100 meters within the basecamp. The infantry on the ground maneuvered to destroy the bunkers and enemy fighting positions but progress was slow. The friendly elements began to receive a heavy volume of .50 caliber machinegun fire, medium machinegun fire, 7.62 and AK-47 fire.

The movement Charlie Company had seen turned out to be a battalion-size NVA unit which had spotted the 2/2 element and was fleeing to the protection of its bunkers.

The enemy soldiers were well dug in and fought with fanatical force. It was decided to call for airstrikes and artillery support fire. Alpha Company returned to the base of fire line and the bunker complex was then pounded by 500 and 750 pound bombs by Air Force planes, 2.75 inch rockets, and artillery fire.

"It was an extremely well coordinated effort of the combined arms," recalls Lieutenant Clark. "We found that bunkers had taken direct hits from the bombs and many casualties were produced by the ordnance that dropped in on them."

Specialist 4 Glenn C. Bliss, North Kingsville, Ohio, a track driver with the reconnaissance element, thought the artillery and air support was "great." "They would bring it right in on top of the bunkers," he said. But so it wouldn't appear that his unit was overly impressed by the supporting fires, he pointed out that the firepower of the .50 and .60 caliber machineguns "from our tracks" definitely kept the enemy's heads down.

The support fires were then lifted and the 2d and 3d Platoons of Charlie Company, and the 1st and 2d Platoons from Alpha Company moved on line, and simultaneously, assaulted the enemy's positions. "More than half of our assaulting line had to go from low

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Div IO

APC'S OF THE 2d Bn, 2d Inf move through Loc Ninh rubber trees.

ground to high ground," said Lieutenant Clark. "But we began to pick up extremely good momentum. The amazing thing about the terrain was the fact that the NVA had violated one of their own rules. They set up in the rubber plantation and had no secondary growth for protection. We had a clear area. . . the best terrain that a mechanized unit could fight in."

"The thing that impressed me about the whole battle overall," said Lieutenant Evans, "was something in mechanized tactics I thought I'd never see. The APC's were on line and the infantry was on the ground maneuvering between them."

Lieutenant Clark had praise for the infantry too: "The people assaulting braved the return fire, exposing themselves rather than staying behind the protection of the tracks. We used the same technique as the previous day," he added, "by fixing the .50 caliber fire on the bunkers, the infantrymen closing in with grenades."

After over-running the outer perimeter defenses, Charlie and Alpha Company began their move into the center of the enemy's position. As they began to pick up momentum, however, they decided to break off their fire and ask the NVA to surrender.

"We called for about 15 minutes for them to Chieu Hoi," said Lieutenant Evans, "but no one gave up."

"The big thing that stands out in my mind about the NVA soldiers," recalls the lieutenant, "was their discipline and courage. They knew that after the first three hours of contact they were going to die in their holes. None of them attempted to surrender."

The attacking force again moved forward. Resistance continued but it didn't have the strength necessary to throw the friendly troops back. As Charlie and Alpha pushed across the bunker complex, the apparent hopelessness of the situation was realized by the enemy soldiers. They began to run. As they withdrew they continued to fight however, and some of the fleeing soldiers hit the friendly troops from the rear. But as Lieutenant Clark explained it, "not by attacking us but by shooting at us from 150 to 200 meters away." They were taken under fire by Alpha Company. By 1630 the fight was over.

"We really surprised them," said Captain Kelly. "The NVA were anticipating a straight infantry unit, but our .50 caliber firepower and maneuverability enabled us to overrun the complex without sustaining high losses."

The two-day engagement cost the enemy 148 dead, and numerous wounded, while allied casualties numbered seven dead.

BIG RED ONE units were continuing Phase II of Operation TOAN THANG as **DANGER FORWARD** went to press.

Div IO

MANEUVER ELEMENTS begin the move back to basecamp after defeating NVA elements at Loc Ninh.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

For Distinguished Service....

The Big Red One is Decorated...

Sp4 Wayne L. Yeager

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM bestowed its highest unit citation for valor on the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION in ceremonies at Di An 10 December 1968.

The Gallantry Cross with Palm, citing the BIG RED ONE for combat actions between 12 July 1965 and 16 October 1968, was accepted for the Division by Major General Orwin C. Talbott, Commanding General, as many high ranking dignitaries looked on. Presenting the medal for the Republic of Vietnam was Lieutenant General Co Cao Tri, Commanding General of the Vietnamese III Corps Tactical Zone.

The award, equivalent to the Distinguished Service Cross, is the first received in Vietnam by the Division as a whole. It cites the "FIGHTING FIRST" for its part in supporting South Vietnam in operations against the communist threat, and reads in part: "The 1st US Infantry Division...distinguished itself by skill in battle and maintained splendid fighting morale in supporting the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam in operations to repress the communist rebellion."

Continuing, the citation said, "Operating in Vietnam from 12 July 1965 until now, in spite of suffering and sacrifice, fighting in extremely difficult conditions, the soldiers of the 1st US Infantry Division bravely and consistently completed many large-scale operations... valiantly stopping the communist activities throughout the III Corps Tactical Zone."

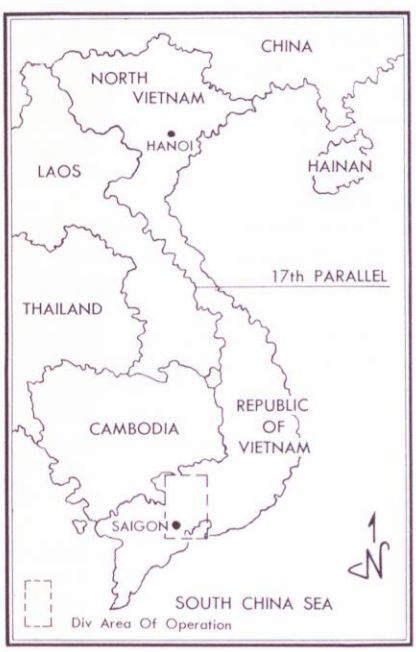
Attending the ceremonies were Lieutenant General Frank T. Mildren, deputy commanding general, USARV; Lieutenant General Walter T. Kerwin Jr., commanding general, II Field Forces, Vietnam; Major General Fillmore K. Mearns, commanding general, Capital Military Assistance Command; Major General Ellis W. Williamson, commanding general, 25th Infantry Division; and Major General Pham Guoc Thuan,

LTC Claude Simpson

MAJOR VIETNAM OPERATIONS IN WHICH THE BIG RED ONE HAS PARTICIPATED.

Hump	Nov 1965
Bushmaster	Nov 1965
Bushmaster II	Nov-Dec 1965
Marauder	Jan 1966
Crimp II	Jan 1966
Rolling Stone	Feb-Mar 1966
Cocoa Beach	Mar 1966
Birmingham	Apr-May 1966
El Paso II	Jun-Jul 1966
Attleboro	Nov 1966
Healdsburg	Nov-Dec 1966
Cedar Falls	Jan 1967
Junction City I & II	Feb-Apr 1967
Manhattan	Apr-May 1967
Billings	Jun 1967
Shenandoah II	Sep-Nov 1967
Quyet Thang	Mar-Apr 1968
Toan Thang, Phase I	Apr-May 1968
Toan Thang, Phase II	May 1968–

THE DIVISION'S AREA OF OPERATION DURING PERIOD CITED IS INDICATED BELOW



Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

commanding general, 5th ARVN Infantry Division.

In the operations cited, BIG RED ONE soldiers accounted for more than 13,000 enemy deaths, confiscated many tons of enemy war material and destroyed great numbers of enemy bases. During this period the Division conducted and participated in Operations ATTLEBORO, LAM SON, JUNCTION CITY, SHENANDOAH II and TOAN THANG.

Operation ATTLEBORO was conducted near Tay Ninh Province and, by the time the operation was over, the BIG RED ONE had killed 845 of the total 1,101 VC body count. Captured were 1,136 tons of rice, thousands of grenades, mines and other munitions. More than 500 tons of resupply cargo were airlifted into the resupply base established at the airfield at Dau Tieng in three days of the operation.

In Operation LAM SON the major task was to initiate a Revolutionary Development program in Binh Duong Province, just north of Saigon. Villages were sealed, searched and VC influence reduced during the operation. An enemy document captured near the end of the operation stated that the enemy was extremely concerned about the effectiveness of the program and that

it had become virtually impossible to recruit new VC in the area around Phu Loi and Phu Cuong where the operation had been concentrated. The document stated also that the Viet Cong were forced to decentralize their basecamps and supply points.

In two major battles near Tay Ninh City during Operation JUNCTION CITY, 167 enemy were killed on 22 February, and 609 on 1 April 1967. When the 52-day operation ended, 1,781 Viet Cong had been killed. Supplies and equipment taken included 310 tons of rice, more than 4,000 grenades, 8,000 pairs of sandals and 127 bicycles.

Operation SHENANDOAH II began as a massive reconnaissance-in-force and road clearing operation by the Division's 1st and 3d Brigades along Highway 13 in the northern part of War Zone C. The elite 9th VC Division was almost completely disrupted, and a victory at Loc Ninh in which nearly 1,000 enemy were killed earned special praise for the Division from General William C. Westmoreland, at that time commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam and United States Army, Vietnam.

Operation TOAN THANG is a massive multi-division operation which is being carried out in two phases. Phase II of the operation is still continuing. During the portion of TOAN THANG cited for the Division award, more than 3,000 enemy were killed by the 1ST DIVISION, and heavy enemy resistance was successfully overcome during fighting near Di An in early May 1968 and during actions in the Loc Ninh area in August and September. Large caches of enemy rockets and mortars were seized, and huge supplies of rice were taken from NVA storage areas to be redistributed to needy Vietnamese.

Although the Gallantry Cross with Palm is the first award received by the Division in Vietnam as a whole, many individual units have received awards, including a U.S. Presidential Unit Citation presented to the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry on 14 July 1967.

Five other unit awards were earned by the BIG RED ONE during World War II, including two French Croix de Guerre Streamers with Palm for the Normandy and Kasserine operations, a French Croix de Guerre Fourragere, and a Belgian Fourragere for action at Mons and Eupen-Malmedy.

Who may wear the Vietnamese Unit Citation Emblem: All personnel who are presently assigned to the BIG RED ONE may wear the ribbon as a result of the Division being awarded the Gallantry Cross with Palm. Personnel may not, however, wear the emblem on departure from the Division until approval has been confirmed in Department of Army general orders.

Maj T. S. Silva

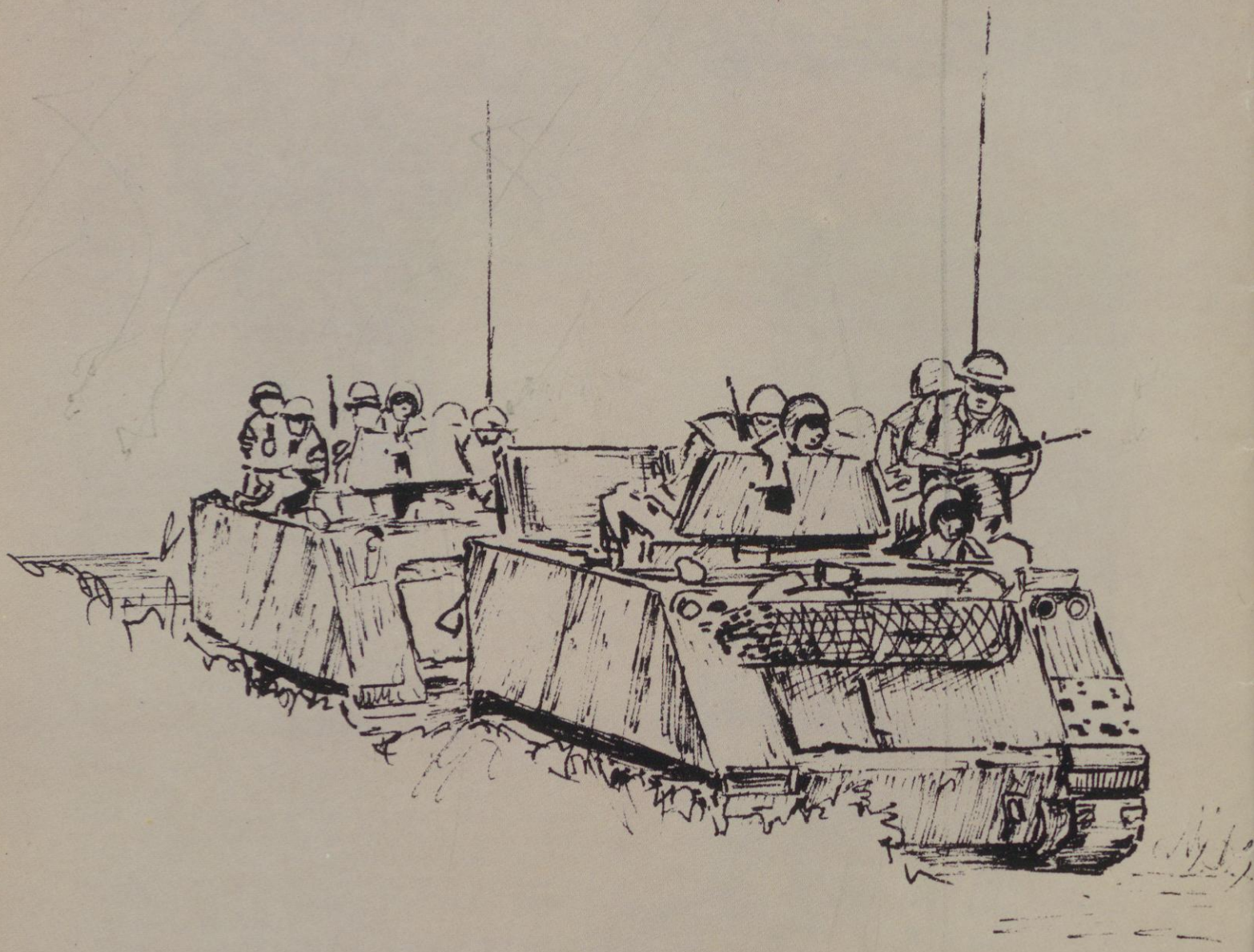
Sp4 Wayne L. Yeager

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Combat Art

BY SP4 DAVE LEWIS

USARV-10



GOING WHERE THE ACTION IS...

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

ARMORED COVER FOR A "GRUNT"...

BUILDING A BASECAMP...

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

CHECKING ON "CHARLIE"...

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

CERTAIN VICTORY

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

LONG RANGE PATROL

STORY BY
MSG JAMES C. STEPHENSON SR

PHOTOS BY
PFC TONY HALLAS

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

"CHARLIE IS AFRAID OF US NOW. He knows we're there—somewhere—in the jungle, rice paddies or in the grass and underbrush. And he's scared."

The men talking are members of the elite painted-faced Long Range Patrol (LRP) of the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION. They are the men known as LRPs (pronounced lurps) who keep a closer watch over "Charlie" than "Charlie" does over his rice ration.

But the watchful eye of the LRPs is not what has made the enemy skeptical of meeting up with the small highly-skilled patrol. "It's the 'strike hard' and 'rapid disappear' techniques that we're using," chuckled Staff Sergeant Steve D. Mattoon, Honolulu, a 39-month Vietnam war veteran, with 11 of those months with the Division's LRPs. "This makes the enemy scared. He doesn't know where we are, what bush we're behind. And this confuses the hell out of him."

The sergeant, camouflaged to look more like the jungle than the natural jungle itself, said that the LRPs do not pick fights with the enemy. "That's not our job. But once he tries to pin us down as has happened on several occasions," added the short, stocky jungle fighter, "we fight back like cornered wildcats. This demolishes the enemy and gives us an opportunity to return with needed information."

The LRPs conduct small patrols consisting of a few highly skilled combat soldiers who function as an intelligence element, or a harassing or combat element. The teams operate on their own in enemy-held territory, usually beyond the immediate support of friendly forces. This is in contrast to the reconnaissance platoons in infantry battalions which normally operate near the rest of their unit.

According to First Lieutenant Jerry M. Davis, a 21-year old platoon leader from Goodfield, Ill., the LRP company consists of a headquarters detachment and two platoons, one attached to the 3d Brigade at Lai Khe, and the other to the 2d Brigade at Di An.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

These adept technicians of war roam the jungles day and night. They are seldom seen, seldom heard, yet they carry on the "eye ball to eye ball" contact of the war. "We see the enemy, we see his cruel, inhuman face, and we listen to his squeaking voice," said Sergeant Ronald Crews, Chandler, Okla. "And we come to hate everything he stands for."

"And when you see a buddy, a close buddy who has helped you out of many tight spots shot down before you," he added sadly, "you want to settle the score—regardless of the odds."

In most instances, however, a LRP team is not prepared to put up a substantial battle against a numerically superior force. "We carry enough ammunition for only a brief contact," explained Private First Class Edward M. Cliff, a five-foot two-inch 115 pound soldier from Waukegan, Ill. "But during that brief moment, the VC think we're a whole company."

The 19-year old soldier, who has been nicknamed "Short Round" because of his size and speed, said the

LRPs' best weapon is their ability to evade the enemy. The youngster had earned the praise of his comrades before he had completed two months with the unit because of his courage demonstrated when they have had to fight their way out of "tight spots."

Once the patrol has been forced into contact with the enemy, each man lays down a substantial base of fire and takes off. This is what they call "immediate action drill." The last man (rear security) saturates the escape route with hand grenades. "And in most instances," related Sergeant Randal J. Harris, a tall athletic-looking 20-year old from Rome, Ga., "the immediate action drill pays off."

He observed that even though the VC live in the jungle and know the terrain, the LRPs can beat them at their own game. "Especially when it comes to losing one's self in the jungles," he chuckled, adjusting his canteen and a couple of plastic bags of water on his belt.

Sergeant Harris relates one experience when his team had been inserted in a heavily jungle-covered area near Lai Khe. "We had just started to set up night camp when we heard voices coming from all directions. We hit the ground and froze."

"A few moments later," he continued, "while we were lying there holding our breath and trying to figure out the situation from behind a cluster of tall, thick

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

elephant grass, I saw a small group of "Charlies" standing six meters away. Then an NVA came strolling by, about three meters from where we were hiding. He walked by. Stopped. Started peeping through the woods searching the area, and again stopped. He rammed both hands into his pockets, murmured something and started to walk away. But it was too late. We knew he had spotted us."

"We shot him down and opened up on the rest of them. That's when we found out that we were smack in the middle of an enemy basecamp," explained the tough-looking soldier as the sweat beamed through the greasy camouflaged makeup on his face."

Interrupting, Sergeant Lonnie L. Ray, 22, Fayetteville, N.C., said, "we weren't afraid because we had two elements working for us. One was the psychological fear and state of confusion we created by the surprise attack, and the other, our lightning response. And we used them both to full advantage."

"Before they could reorganize or adjust themselves to what had happened, we were 500 meters (542 yards) away, being extracted by a helicopter," he continued. "And man, that 'bird' looked good!"

"Meanwhile," he said, "the enemy basecamp was being bombarded by artillery, and gunships were in pursuit of the NVA." The support was called in by the LRPs' radio operator.

Another close call, according to 19-year old Specialist 4 Gerald Smith, Birmingham, Ala., was when his team was caught in the middle of a rice paddy as 125 VC passed within five meters. "There's no need to lie," chuckled Smith, as he belted a large commando knife to his leg. "The butterflies bounced up and down in my stomach. And to top this, mosquitoes about the size of your finger drew blood from the uncovered portion of my body, and the water leaches brought blood from inside my jungle fatigues. It was one of my most fearful moments since I have been with the LRPs," he recalled.

"All I could do was grit my teeth—harder and harder—to keep from crying out. The only thing that prevented me from doing so, was a voice from out of nowhere. And of course, there were the agonizing faces of my team mates, staring up toward the sky. I guess we were each praying for the other one."

On any mission, regardless of its size, team or platoon, the LRPs are always concerned about their team members. "We have a motto—All For One and One For All—," related Sergeant Horace Lee Watson, Hazleburst, Ga. "And we abide by it. A man may be a real 'sorehead' in basecamp, but on a mission he's your best friend."

Watson, 20, and a two-year Vietnam veteran with eight months under his belt with the LRPs, said he encountered the highest morale and spirit of any unit with the LRPs. "We train together, live together, suffer hardships together, and if necessary, even die together."

"But we don't think of dying," interrupted Corporal Charles J. Arnold, a nine month LRP team member from Barnesville, Ohio. We always know we're coming back alive. We have a lot to live for. Most of us have a high school or college sweetheart waiting back home. Others have a wife and children. Then there are our parents—mothers, fathers and one or two sisters and brothers."

Adding, as he seemed to recall memories of those loved ones he left back home, "Yes, we have a real need to come back alive. And I guess that's why we fight so hard."

Patterned after the American Indians who were quite successful in their scouting techniques against the early American settlers, the LRPs are striking heavy blows against the VC, both physical and psychological. "The technique is old but far from being outdated," commented Sergeant First Class Loran B. Massey, Johnston City, Tenn., the man who puts the LRP's into position, and takes them out when the job is done.

The operations sergeant is something like the "hub" of LRP missions. He coordinates the requested missions from higher headquarters down to the execution of the final order.

Sergeant Massey gets his order from the BIG RED ONE's 3d Brigade S-2 based on the situation report from intelligence channels. He in turn sets the wheels in motion, readying the LRP team for their insertion. From there, everything is an automatic chain of reactions. The potential area is surveyed by a LRP leader from a helicopter; routes of travel and escape are planned and other possible VC hiding places analyzed.

Once the teams are inserted, usually by helicopter, the 15-year Army veteran, with eight years as an operations sergeant, sticks close by the radio. Whatever happens, a call for extraction, artillery fire, close air

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

support, helicopter gunships, aero-rifle team or another team of LRPs, the sergeant spins his radio dial, and the request is granted within a few minutes.

"I'm something like the middle-man," explained SFC Massey. "If the situation calls for a hunter-killer team, surveillance team or a reconnaissance mission, the LRPs are ready. I can put them in a position in a matter of minutes."

In addition, the sergeant coordinates all required LRP training, something that never stops. Each platoon maintains a rigid daily training program with heavy emphasis on physical fitness. They also attend the MACV Recondo School.

Here, the men, most of them volunteers for the LRPs, undergo three weeks of extensive training in map reading, navigation, intelligence, supporting fire, medical training, patrolling techniques and physical conditioning. When they complete the school each man can perform all the tasks required on a patrol and double for other team members if necessary. He can call in fire missions, gunships, or take over the platoon leader's role in a "must" situation.

In essence, the LRPs' motto—"One For All and All For One"—is the key to success. Just as the Indian scouts reconnoitered the colonists' positions for their warring tribes, the LRPs are functioning as the eyes and ears of the 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION. How well they have done their job can be affirmed by statistics. They killed 238 NVA and VC soldiers during 1968, and "pointed the finger" at enemy unit locations on dozens of occasions for combat infantrymen of the Division.

"Charlie" should be afraid of them now.

End of a mission and a call is made for extraction.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

ONE 1 LINERS

1 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION soldiers are reminded that the filing of a federal income tax return while stationed in Vietnam is voluntary. A tax return must be filed, but a grace period of 180 days is allowed after return to the United States.

1 Going on R&R? Make sure you understand US Treasury Department regulations regarding the purchase of souvenirs. You may not purchase or import goods of any type made in Communist China, North Korea, or North Vietnam. Why? This prevents communist countries from obtaining American currency through the sale of such goods.

1 Public Law 90–240 extends until 31 December 1969 the time in which service personnel in combat areas are authorized duty free entry of gifts, up to a retail value of $50, to the United States.

1 BIG RED ONE personnel who serve at least 120 days in Vietnam are authorized to accumulate up to 90 days leave. Leave in excess of 60 days so accumulated is lost unless it is used by the individual before the end of the fiscal year after the fiscal year in which service in Vietnam ceased.

1 Improved GI Bill benefits now permit 1ST DIVISION soldiers to:
...Receive a full 36 months of benefits with service from 18 to 24 months since 31 January 1955.
...Use up to 48 months of education benefits under the GI Bill and the War Orphans Educational Assistance Program, combined.
...Allows education benefits to widows of men killed as a result of military service.

1 Planning on purchasing a home? The old maximum guarantee of $7,500 on GI home loans has been raised to $12,500. In addition, the permissible interest rate was raised from 6 to 6¾ per cent to make it easier for veterans to obtain loans.

1 Some members of the Division may be in store for a tax refund if the Supreme Court upholds a lower court ruling on the payment of state taxes (and if you saved your old tax receipts). In a case in Connecticut, a circuit court ruled that non-resident military personnel need not pay sales and use taxes of the host state. The ruling was based on the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act. Connecticut and 19 other states have appealed the finding which, if upheld, would be retroactive to 28 June 1964.

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Four "Goldiggers"

Spc 4 Jay G. Smith

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives

Danger Forward, Volume 3, Issue 1, Pub. Date March 1, 1969, Collection:1st Infantry Division Publications—Vietnam
RRMRC Digital Archives